



“Revamped Inland Waterways to Power Northeast’s Growth, Boost Petroleum Exports to from Assam:” Shri Sarbananda Sonowal

“NE Means New Engine of Growth”: Union Minister Shri Sarbananda Sonowal

“Operational Waterways Up 767%, Cargo Volume Rises 635% as Inland Water Transport Sees Record Growth”: Shri Sonowal

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Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Shri Sarbananda Sonowal said the rapid modernisation of India’s inland waterways, particularly in the Northeast, is set to unlock major economic opportunities and strengthen the petroleum supply chain and export routes connecting Assam to Bangladesh and Southeast Asia.

Speaking at the North East Oil & Gas Conclave 2025, the Union Minister said, *“Under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji, the renewed focus on Inland Water Transport (IWT) has enabled smooth and swift cargo movement, reduce logistics costs and provide a reliable multimodal network for the movement of petroleum products and industrial cargo across the Brahmaputra and Barak river systems. This has not only revived one of the oldest and proven conduits of economic prosperity but also repurposed the economic activity and prosperity in the hinterland of the region.”*

The Minister said that jetties and terminals in Assam — including Pandu, Jogighopa, Dhubri, Bogibeel, Karimganj and Badarpur — have emerged as critical hubs for cross-border trade. These river terminals facilitate the export of petroleum products and large industrial consignments to Bangladesh and onward destinations, cutting transit distance, travel time and fuel consumption compared to road transport.

Shri Sarbananda Sonowal highlighted that the transport of over-dimensional cargo (ODC) to Numaligarh Refinery for its expansion, and the ongoing movement of petroleum products using river routes, have demonstrated the operational efficiency and scalability of waterways as a long-term logistics solution. Year-round navigation ensured through extensive dredging and fairway maintenance enables uninterrupted movement of heavy cargo for refinery, exploration and downstream industries.

"The Inland Waterways sector today stands as the backbone of energy transportation for the Northeast, reinforcing India's energy security and unlocking new trade corridors," Shri Sarbananda Sonowal said, noting that annual cargo movement on NW-2 is now approaching 6 lakh tonnes, driven by faster turnaround and reliable navigation.

The Union Minister said the government has undertaken ₹1,000 crore worth of inland waterway projects in the Northeast in the past two years, including permanent cargo terminals, ship repair facilities, tourist jetties and urban water transport systems. A ₹239 crore ship repair facility at Pandu is under development, expected to significantly reduce maintenance costs for river vessels that currently travel to Kolkata through Bangladesh for repairs.

Investments are also being directed toward modern river-based tourism infrastructure, lighthouse development, and skill and training facilities. A Regional Centre of Excellence in Dibrugarh, being built at a cost of ₹188 crore, will train nearly 5,000 students in maritime skills and logistics operations.

He emphasised that Inland Waterways are central to India's Act East Policy and the country's goal of building a future-ready logistics ecosystem. *"Our efforts are aimed at reducing logistics costs, boosting trade, and creating new employment and industrial opportunities. The Northeast is ready to lead India into a new era of connectivity, sustainability and prosperity,"* Shri Sonowal said.

Shri Sonowal noted that a number of major projects have been undertaken for the Northeast by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways in the past few years. He said that 76 national waterways will become operational by 2027. Cargo movement on national waterways reached an all-time high of 146 million tonnes last year, compared to just 18 million tonnes earlier. During India Maritime Week 2025, the Inland Waterways Authority of India signed MoUs worth ₹40,000 crore to enhance the efficiency of waterborne logistics. He added that the unprecedented increases — 767% in operational waterways, 635% in cargo volume, 233% in investment and 62% in multimodal terminals — reflect remarkable progress in the inland waterways sector.

The Union Minister thanked the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) for organising the conclave and called for deeper collaboration between government and industry to accelerate private participation, innovation and infrastructure development in the energy and transport sectors.

The Union Minister was joined at the event by Assam Minister Kaushik Roy, Assam Chief Secretary Ravi Kota, Joint Secretary of the Union Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas Vinod Sesan, and CII Assam Oil and Gas Chair S. K. Baruah, among other dignitaries.





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